

KSMU 91.1

July 17, 2008

New Legislation Expected to Benefit Stroke and Heart Attack Patients

Legislation that Governor Matt Blunt recently signed is hoped to increase the chances of survival for stroke and heart attack victims in Missouri. KSMU's Michele Skalicky reports.

[Listen](#) 

The new law creates a "time critical diagnosis system" for stroke and ST-elevation myocardial infarction or STEMI, a serious type of heart attack. It requires that emergency medical services transport those patients to a medical facility that's capable of taking care of those problems.

"Not all hospitals, if you will, are stroke ready or heart attack ready, and to take care of those folks, they need, in a very time-critical fashion, to get treatment so that blood flow is restored to the brain or blood flow is restored to the heart muscle."

Dr. Scott Duff is a neurologist and medical director of CoxHealth's Stroke Center and served on the task force that developed the legislation. He says ensuring those patients get the treatment they need when they need it requires coordinated teams of care.

"This legislation will help get people to where they need to be sooner and take advantage of those procedures or medicines so that we can save them from complications from their illness or even dying from that illness."

Research shows that stroke and STEMI patients transported to hospitals that are equipped to treat them rather than simply to the nearest facility have higher survival rates.

Duff says, currently, the designation for stroke centers is thru the Joint Commission Association, but it hasn't yet been declared by the state. He says the legislation creates a task force to decide what is a stroke and STEMI ready facility and what is not.

While Duff applauds the legislation, he urges people to seek help as quickly as possible when experiencing symptoms of a stroke or heart attack since the window of opportunity for the best treatment is only around 3 hours.